General Assembly

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Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[*on the report of the Third Committee (A/56/583/Add.2)*]

56/158. National institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions and those of the Commission on Human Rights concerning national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights,

Welcoming the rapidly growing interest throughout the world in the creation and strengthening of independent, pluralistic national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights,

Convinced of the important role that such national institutions play and will continue to play in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms and in developing and enhancing public awareness of those rights and freedoms,

Recognizing that the United Nations has played an important role and should continue to play a more important role in assisting the development of national institutions,

Recalling the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993,[1] which reaffirmed the important and constructive role played by national human rights institutions, in particular in their advisory capacity to the competent authorities and their role in remedying human rights violations, in disseminating information on human rights and in education in human rights,

Recalling also the Beijing Platform for Action,[2] in which Governments were urged to create or strengthen independent national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, including the human rights of women,

Noting the diverse approaches adopted throughout the world for the promotion and protection of human rights at the national level, emphasizing the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, and emphasizing and

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[1] A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

[2] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

recognizing the value of such approaches in promoting universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Noting with satisfaction the constructive participation of representatives of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights in, and their positive contribution to, the deliberations of the World Conference on Human Rights, the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the Commission on Human Rights, as well as international seminars and workshops on human rights organized or sponsored by the United Nations,

Welcoming the strengthening in all regions of regional cooperation among national human rights institutions and between national human rights institutions and other regional human rights forums,

Welcoming also the strengthening of international cooperation among national human rights institutions, including through the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General;[1]

2. *Reaffirms* the importance of the development of effective, independent and pluralistic national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, in keeping with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993;

3. *Recognizes* that, in accordance with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,[1] it is the right of each State to choose the framework for the national institutions that is best suited to its particular needs at the national level in order to promote human rights in accordance with international human rights standards;

4. *Encourages* Member States to establish or, where they already exist, to strengthen national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, as outlined in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action;

5. *Welcomes* the growing number of States establishing or considering the establishment of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights;

6. *Encourages* national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights established by Member States to continue to play an active role in preventing and combating all violations of human rights as enumerated in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and relevant international instruments;

7. *Notes with satisfaction* the efforts of those States that have provided their national institutions with more autonomy and independence, including by giving them an investigative role or enhancing such a role, and encourages other Governments to consider taking similar steps;

8. *Reaffirms* the role of national institutions, where they exist, as appropriate agencies, inter alia, for the dissemination of human rights materials and other public information activities, including those of the United Nations, in

[1] A/56/255.

particular in the context of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995–2004;

9. *Urges* the Secretary-General to continue to give high priority to requests from Member States for assistance in the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions as part of the United Nations Programme of Advisory Services and Technical Assistance in the Field of Human Rights;

10. *Commends* the high priority given by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to work on national institutions, and, in view of the expanded activities relating to national institutions, encourages the High Commissioner to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made and budgetary resources provided to continue and further extend activities in support of national human rights institutions, and invites Governments to contribute additional, earmarked funds to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights for that purpose;

11. *Notes with appreciation* the increasingly active and important role of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions, as recognized in Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/54 of 4 March 1994,[4] in close cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner, in assisting Governments and national institutions, when requested, to follow up on relevant resolutions and recommendations concerning the strengthening of national institutions;

12. *Also notes with appreciation* the holding of regular meetings of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions and the arrangements for the participation of national human rights institutions in the annual sessions of the Commission on Human Rights;

13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to provide the necessary assistance for holding meetings of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions during the sessions of the Commission on Human Rights, in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner;

14. *Welcomes* the continuation of the practice of national institutions convening regional meetings in some regions, and its initiation in others, and encourages national institutions, in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to organize similar events with Governments and non-governmental organizations in their own regions;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to provide, including from the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights, the necessary assistance for holding international and regional meetings of national institutions;

16. *Recognizes* the important and constructive role that non-governmental organizations may play, in cooperation with national institutions, for better promotion and protection of human rights;

17. *Encourages* all Member States to take appropriate steps to promote the exchange of information and experience concerning the establishment and effective operation of national institutions;

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[4] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No. 4* and corrigendum (E/1994/24 and Corr.1), chap. II, sect. A.

18. *Encourages* all United Nations entities, funds and agencies to work in close cooperation with national institutions in the promotion and protection of human rights;

19. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on the implementation of the present resolution.

88th plenary meeting
19 December 2001